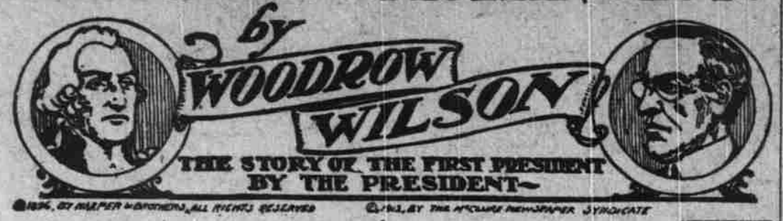
GEORGE WASHINGTON



(CONTINUED.)

To Strike at Niagara.

Governor Shirley, the council agreed, should strike at once at Niagara with the king's new provincial regiments, in the hope to cut the enemy's connections with their western posts; Colonel William Johnson, the cool-headed trader and borderer, who had lived and thriven so long in the forests where the dreaded Mohawks had their strength, should lead a levy from New England, New York and New Jersey, to an attack upon Crown Point, where for twenty-four years the French had held Champlain; and Lieutenant Colonel Monckton, of the king's regulars, must take a similar force against Beausejour in Acadia, while General Braddock struck straight into the western wilderness to take Duquesne.

'Twere best to be prompt in every part of the hazardous business, and Braddock turned from the conference to push his own expedition forward at once. "After taking Fort Duquesne," he said to Franklin, "I am to proceed to Niagara; and after having taken that, to Frontenac, if the season will allow time; and I suppose it will, for Duquesne can hardly detain me above three or four days; and then I can see nothing that can obstruct my march to Niagara."

The Sagacious Franklin.

"To be sure, sir," quietly replied the sagacious Franklin; "if you arrive well before Duquesne with these fine troops, so well provided with artillery, the fort . . . can probably make but a short resistance."

But there was the trouble. 'Twould have been better, no doubt, had a route through Pennsylvania been chosen, where cultivated farms already stretched well into the west, with their own roads and grain and cattle and wagons to serve an army with; but the Virginia route had been selected (by intrigue of gentlemen interested in the Ohio company, it was hinted), and must needs be made the best of.

There was there, at the least, the rough track Washington's men had cut to the Great Meadows. This must be widened and leveled for an army with its cumbrous train of artillery, and its endless procession of wagons laden with baggage and provisions. To take two thousand men through the dense forests with all the military trappings and supplies of a European army would be to put, it might be, four miles of its rough trail between van and rear of the struggling line, and it would be a clumsy enemy, as fighting went in the woods, who could not cut such a force into pieces—"like thread," as Franklin said.

The Advance Begins.

The thing was to be attempted, nevertheless, with stubborn British resolution. It was the 19th of May before all the forces intended for the march were finally collected at Fort Cumberland, twenty-two hundred men in all—fourteen hundred regulars, now the recruits were in; nearly five hundred Virginians, horse and foot; two Independent companies from New York; and a small force of sailors from the transports to rig tackle for the ordnance when there was need on the rough way. And it was the 10th of June when the advance began, straight into that "realm of forests ancient as the world" that lay without limit upon all the western ways."

Braddock a Mischief Breeder.

It was a thing of infinite difficulty to get that lumbering train through the tangled wilderness, and it kept the temper of the truculent Braddock very hot to see how it played havoc with every principle and practice of campaigning he had ever heard of. He charged the colonists with an utter want alike of honor and of honesty to have kept him so long awaiting the transportation and supplies they had promised, and to have done so little to end with, and so drew Washington into "frequent disputes, maintained with warmth on both sides"; but the difficulties of the march presently wrought a certain forest change upon him, and disposed him to take counsel of his young Virginian aide—the only man in all his company who could speak out of knowledge in that wild country.

On the 19th, at Washington's advice, he took twelve hundred men and pressed forward with a lightened train to a quicker advance, leaving Colonel Dunbar to bring up the rest of the troops with the baggage. Even this lightened force halted "to level every mole-hill, and to erect bridges over every brook," as Washington chafed to see, and "were four days in getting twelve miles"; but the pace was better than before, and brought them at last almost to their destination.

Surprised by the Enemy.

On the 9th of July, at mid-day, they waded the shallow Monongahela, but eight miles from Duquesne, making a brave show as the sun struck upon their serried ranks, their bright uniforms, their fluttering banners, and their glittering arms, and went straight into the rough and shadowed forest path that led to the French post.

Upon a sudden there came a man bounding along the path to meet them, wearing the gorget of a French officer, and the forest behind him swarmed with a great host of but half-discovered men. Upon signal given, these spread themselves to the right and left within the shelter of the forest, and from their covert poured a deadly fire upon Braddock's advancing lines.

With good, British pluck the steady regulars formed their accustomed ranks, crying, "God save the king!" to give grace to the volleys they sent back into the forest; the ordnance was brought up and swung to its work; all the force pressed forward to take what place it could in the fight; but where was the use?

Braddock Will Not Listen.

Washington besought General Braddock to scatter his men too, and meet the enemy under cover as they came, but he would not listen. They must stand in ranks, as they were bidden, and take the fire of their hidden foes like men, without breach of discipline. When they would have broken in spite of him, in their panic at being slaughtered there in the open glade without sight of the enemy, Braddock beat them back with his sword, and bitterly cursed them for cowards.

He would have kept the Virginians, too, back from the covert if he could when he saw them seek to close with the attacking party in true forest fashion. As it was, they were as often shot down by the terror-stricken regulars behind them as by their right foes in front. They alone made any head in the fight; but who could tell in such a place how the battle fared?

Redskins in Force.

No one could count the enemy where they sprang from covert to covert. They were, in fact, near a thousand strong at the first meeting in the way—more than six hundred Indians, a motley host gathered from far and near at the summons of the French, sevenscore Canadian rangers, seventy odd regulars from the fort, and thirty or forty French officers, come out of sheer eagerness to have a hand in the daring game. Contrecoeur could not spare more Frenchmen from his little garrison, his connections at the lakes being threatened, and he sorely straightened for men and stores. He was staking everything, as it was, upon this encounter on the way.

If the English should shake the savages off, as he deemed they would, he must no doubt withdraw as he could ere the lines of siege were closed about him. He never dreamed of such largess of good fortune as came pouring in upon him.

The English were not only checked, but beaten.

They had never seen business like this. 'Twas a pitiful, shameful slaughter—men shot like bears in a pen there where they cowered close in the scarlet ranks.

Their first blazing volley had sent the craven Canadians scampering back the way they had come; Beaujeu, who led the attack, was killed almost at the first onset; but the gallant youngsters who led the motley array wavered never an instant, and readily held the Indians to their easy work.

Washington did all that furious energy and reckless courage could to keep the order of battle his commander had so madly chosen, to hold the regulars to their blind work and hearten the Virginians to stay the threatened rout, driving his horse everywhere into the thick of the murderous firing, and crying upon all alike to keep to it steadily like men. He had but yesterday rejoined the advance, having for almost two weeks lain stricken with a fever in Dunbar's camp.

A Charmed Life.

He could hardly sit his cushioned saddle for weakness when the fight began; but when the blaze of the battle burst, his eagerness was suddenly like that of one possessed, and his immunity from harm like that of one charmed. Thrice a horse was shot under him, many bullets cut his clothing, but he went without a wound. A like mad energy drove Braddock storming up and down the breaking lines, but he was mortally stricken at last, and Washington alone remained to exercise such control as was possible when the inevitable rout came.

It was impossible to hold the ground in such fashion. The stubborn Braddock himself had ordered a retreat ere the fatal bullet found him. Sixty-three out of the eighty-six officers of his force were killed or disabled; less than five hundred men out of all the thirteen hundred who had but just now passed so gallantly through the ford remained unhurt; the deadly slaughter must have gone on to utter destruction.

Death of Braddock.

Retreat was inevitable—'twas blessed good fortune that it was still possible. When once it began it was headlong, reckless, frenzied. The men ran wildly, blindly, as if hunted by demons whom no man might hope to resist—haunted by the frightful cries, maddened by the searching and secret fire of their foes, now coming hot upon their heels. Wounded comrades, military stores, baggage, their very arms, they left upon the ground, abandoned. Far into the night they ran madly on, in frantic search for the camp of the rear division, crying, as they ran, for help; they even passed the camp, in their uncontrollable terror of pursuit, and went desperately on toward the settlements.

Washington and the few officers and provincials who scorned the terror found the utmost difficulty in bringing off their stricken general, where he lay wishing to die. Upon the fourth day after the battle he died, loathing the sight of a redcoat, they said, and murmuring praises of "the blues," the once despised Virginians. They buried his body in the road, that the army wagons might pass over the place and obliterate every trace of a grave their savage enemies might rejoice to find and desecrate.

A Craven Commander.

He had lived to reach Dunbar's camp, but not to see the end of the shameful rout. The terror mastered the rear guard, too. They destroyed their artillery, burned their wagons and stores, emptied their powder into the streams, and themselves broke into a disordered feverish retreat which was a mere flight, their cravan commander shamefully acquiescing. He would not even hold or rally them at Fort Cumberland, but went on, as if upon a hurried errand, all the way to Philadelphia, leaving the fort, and all the frontier with it, "to be defended by invalids and a few Virginians."

"I acknowledge," cried Dinwiddie, "I was not brought up to arms; but I think common sense would have prevailed not to leave the frontier exposed after having opened a road over the mountains to the Ohio, by which the enemy can the more easily invade us. The whole conduct of Colonel Dunbar seems to be monstrous." And so, indeed it was.

But the colonies at large had little time to think of it. Governor Shirley had gone against Niagara only to find the French ready for him at every point, now that they had read Braddock's papers, taken at Duquesne, and to come back again without doing anything. Beausejour had been taken in Acadia, but it lay apart from the main field of struggle. Johnson beat the French off at Lake George when they attacked him, and took Dieskau, their commander; but he contented himself with that, and left Crown Point untouched. There were other frontiers besides those of Virginia and Pennsylvania to be looked to and guarded.

Three Years of French Success.

For three long years did the fortunes of the English settlements go steadily from danger to desperation, as the French and their savage allies advanced from victory to victory. In 1756 Oswego was taken; in 1757, Fort William Henry. Commander succeeded commander among the English, only to add blunder to blunder, failure to failure.

And all the while it fell to Washington, Virginia's chief stay in her desperate trouble, to stand steadfastly to the hopeless work of keeping three hundred and fifty miles of frontier with a few hundred men against prowling bands of savages, masters of the craft of swift and secret attack, dexterous at skulking," in a country "mountainous and full of swamps and hollow ways covered with woods."

For twenty years now settlers had been coming steadily into this wilderness that lay up and down upon the nearer slopes of the great mountains—Germans, Scots-Irish, a hard breed. Their settlements lay scattered far and near among the foot-hills and valleys. Their men were valiant and stout-hearted, quick with the rifle, hard as flint when they were once aroot to revenge themselves for murdered wives and children and comrades.

But how could they, scattered as they were, meet these covert sallies in the dead of night—a sudden rush of men with torches, the keen knife, the quick rifle? The country filled with fugitives, for whom Washington's militiamen could find neither food nor shelter.

Washington's Tender Heart.

"The supplicating tears of the women, and moving petitions of the men," cried the young commander, "melt me into such deadly sorrow that I solemnly declare, if I know my own mind, I could offer myself a willing sacrifice to the butchering enemy, provided that would contribute to the people's ease. . . . I would be a willing offering to save fury, and die by inches to save a people."

It was a comfort to know, at least, that he was trusted and believed in. The Burgesses had thanked him under the very stroke of Braddock's defeat, in terms which could not be doubted sincere. In the very thick of his deep troubles, when he would have guarded the helpless people of the border, but could not, Colonel Fairfax could send him word from Williamsburg, "Your good health and fortune are the toast at every table." "Our Colonel," wrote a young comrade in arms, "is an example of fortitude in either danger or hardships, and by his easy, polite behavior has gained not only the regard but affection of both officers and soldiers."

A Trying Ordeal.

But it took all the steadiness that had been born or bred in him to endure the strain of the disheartening task, from which he could not in honor break away. His plans, he complained, were "today approved, tomorrow condemned." He was bidden do what was impossible. It would require fewer men to go against Duquesne again and remove the cause of danger than to prevent the effects while the cause remained. Many of his officers were careless and inefficient, many of his men mutinous. "Your Honor will, I hope, excuse my hanging instead of shooting them," he wrote to the governor; "it conveyed much more terror to others, and it was for example's sake that we did it."

It was a test as of fire for a young colonel in his twenties.

But a single light lies upon the picture. Early in 1776, ere the summer's terrors had come upon the border, and while he could be spared, Washington took horse and made his way to Boston to see Governor Shirley, now acting as commander-in-chief in the colonies, and from him at first hand obtained settlement of that teasing question of rank that had already driven the young officer once from the service. He went very bravely bright in proper uniform of buff and blue, a white-and-scarlet cloak upon his shoulders, the sword at his side knotted with red and gold, his horse's fittings engraved with the Washington arms, and trimmed in the best style of the London saddlers. With him rode two aides in their uniforms, and two servants in their white-and-scarlet livery.

Curious folk who looked upon the celebrated young officer upon the road saw him fare upon his way with all the pride of an admirable Virginia gentleman, a handsome man, and an admirable horseman—a very gallant figure, no one could deny. Everywhere he was feted as he went; everywhere he showed himself the earnest, high-strung, achieving youth he was.

An Affair of the Heart.

In New York he fell into a new ambush, from which he did not come off without a wound. His friend Beverly Robinson must needs have Miss Mary Phillipse at his house there, a beauty and an heiress, and Washington came away from her with a sharp rigor at his heart. But he could not leave that desolate frontier at home unprotected to stay for a siege of a lady's heart; he had recovered from such wounds before, had before that left pleasure for duty; and in proper season, was back at his post, with papers from Shirley which left no doubt who should command in Virginia.

At last, in 1758, the end came, when William Pitt thrust smaller men aside and became prime minister in England. Amherst took Louisbourg, Wolfe came to Quebec and General Forbes, that stout and steady soldier, was sent to Virginia to go against Duquesne. The advance was slow to exasperation in the view of every ardent man like Washington, and cautious almost to timidity; but the very delay redounded to its success at last.

Home for the Winter.

'Twas November before Duquesne was reached. The Indians gathered there, seeing winter come on, had not waited to meet them; and the French by that time knew themselves in danger of being cut off by the English operations in the north. When Forbes' forces, therefore, at last entered those fatal woods again, where Braddock's slaughtered men had lain to rot, the French had withdrawn; nothing remained but to enter the smoking ruins of their abandoned fort, hoist the king's flag, and rename the post Fort Pitt; and Washington turned homeward again to seek the rest he so much needed.

A Hazardous Feat.

It had been almost a bloodless campaign, but such danger as it had brought Washington had shared to the utmost. The French had not taken themselves off without at least one trial of the English strength. While yet Forbes lay within the mountains a large detachment had come from Duquesne to test and reconnoiter his force Colonel Mercer of the Virginia line, had been ordered forward with a party to meet them.

He stayed so long, and the noise of the firing came back with so doubtful a meaning to the anxious ears at the camp, that Washington hastened with volunteers to his relief. In the dusk the two bodies of Englishmen met, mistook each other for enemies exchanged a deadly fire, and were checked only because Washington rushed between their lines, even while their pieces blazed, cried his hot commands to stop, and struck up the smoking muzzles with his sword. 'Twas through no prudence of his that he was not shot.

French Power Ends.

For a long time his friends had felt a deep uneasiness about his health. They had very earnestly besought him not to attempt a new campaign. "You will in all probability bring on a relapse," George Mason had warned him, "and render yourself incapable of serving the public at a time when there may be the utmost occasion. There is nothing more certain than that a gentleman of your station owes the care of his health and his life not only to himself and his friends, but to his country." But he had deemed the nearest duty the most imperative; and it was only after that duty was disposed of that he had turned from the field to seek home and new pleasures along with new duties. The winter brought news from Quebec of the fall of the French power in America, which made rest and home and pleasure the more grateful and full of zest.

An Accidental Meeting.

On a May day in 1758, as he spurred upon the way to Williamsburg, under orders from the frontier, Washington rode straight upon an adventure he had not looked for.

He was within a few miles' ride of the little capital; old plantations lay close upon the way; neighborly homes began to multiply; and so striking a horseman riding uniformed and unattended, could not thereabouts go far unrecognized. He was waylaid and haled to dinner, despite excuses and protests of public business calling for dispatch. There was a charming woman to be seen at the house, his friend told him, if a good dinner was not argument enough—and his business could not spoil for an hour's stay in agreeable company. And so, of a sudden, under constraint of Virginian hospitality, he was hurried into the presence of the gracious young matron who was at once, and as if of right, to make his heart safe against further quest of adventure.

Martha Custis was but six-and-twenty. To the charm of youth and beauty were added that touch of quiet sweetness and that winning grace of self-possession which come to a woman wived in her girlhood, and widowed before age or care has checked the first full tide of life. At seventeen she had married Daniel Parke Custis, a man more than twenty years her senior; for eight years of quiet love and duty as wife and mother had only made her youth the more gracious in that rural land of leisure and good neighborhood; and a year's widowhood had been but a suitable preparation for perceiving the charm of this stately young soldier who now came riding her way upon the public business.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Back numbers of this Story can be obtained at this office.

OPPORTUNITY!

The following poem by Judge Walter Malone, one of the great poets of the South, ought to be pasted up in every young man's room. There is inspiration in it.

Opportunity

They do me wrong who say I come no more
When once I knock and fail to find you in;
For every day I stand without your door
And bid you work, and rise to fight and win.

Wail not for precious chances passed away,
Weep not for golden ages on the wane!
Each night I burn the records of the day—
At sunrise every soul is born again!

Laugh like a boy at splendors that have fled,
To vanished joys be blind and deaf and dumb;
My judgments seal the dead past with its dead,
But never bind a moment yet to come.

Though deep in mire, wring not your hands and weep;
I lend my arm to all who say "I can."
No shame-faced outcast ever sank so deep
But he might rise and be again a man!

Dost thou behold thy lost youth all aghast?
Dost reel from righteous retribution's blow?
Then turn from blotted archives of the past,
And find the future's pages white as snow.

Art thou a mourner? Rouse thee from thy spell;
Art thou a sinner? Sins may be forgiven;
Each morning gives thee wings to flee from hell,
Each night a star to guide thy feet to heaven.

Advertised Letters

Arch Broning,
Florence Brooks,
Robt. L. Carpenter,
Geo. David,
H. H. Floyd,
Annie Gill,
Fannie Lamb or Samb,
Jennie Murphy,
Conzelia Massie,
Edna McNeel,
B. F. McMorris,
Ed. Massie,
J. W. Marsh,
Frank Schierenback,
Clifton Estill.

Down and Out

Desha Breckinridge fails in his fight for collector of the Seventh District. The name of Ben Marshall of Frankfort was sent to the Senate Wednesday by President Wilson. He was confirmed Saturday.

Mr. Marshall is the Clerk of the Franklin Circuit Court. The appointment seems to give general satisfaction.